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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in paragraph-by-paragraph vote, adopts resolution condemning recent massacre of Palestinians in Hebron; calls on Israel to prevent illegal violence by Israeli settlers; also calls for temporary international or foreign presence, within context of peace process, to guarantee safety of Palestinians in occupied territory.

+ Secretary-General to send fact-finding mission to Burundi tomorrow, at request of Government, to investigate 1993 coup d'état and massacres.

+ Secretary-General and GATT Director-General appoint J. Denis Bélisle of Canada as Executive Director of UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre.

+ Croatia, in letter to Security Council, says it would accept extension of UNPROFOR mandate on its territory, but stresses that Force must fully implement relevant Council resolutions.

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The Security Council today strongly condemned the massacre of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron on 25 February, and called on Israel to continue to take measures, including confiscation of arms, to prevent illegal acts of violence by Israeli settlers. The Council also called for measures to guarantee the safety of Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory, including a temporary international or foreign presence, within the context of the ongoing peace process. Such a presence was provided for in the Declaration of Principles signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington last September. The Council took that action by adopting resolution 904 (1994) in a paragraph-by-paragraph vote.

The Council asked the co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the Russian Federation, to continue efforts to invigorate that process, and to undertake the necessary support for the implementation of the measures called for in today's resolution. The Council reaffirmed its support for the peace process and called for the implementation of the Declaration of Principles without delay.

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All of the operative paragraphs in the resolution were adopted unanimously, but the United States abstained from voting on preambular paragraphs two and six. Preambular paragraph two referred to "occupied Palestinian territory", while preambular paragraph six reaffirmed "the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 to the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967, including Jerusalem, and the Israeli responsibilities thereunder".

Speaking in explanation of vote, United States Permanent Representative Madeline Albright said her Government had sought the unusual procedure of a paragraph-by-paragraph vote because it objected to the language used in the draft. She said the description of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 as "occupied Palestinian territory" could be taken to indicate sovereignty, a matter which both Israel and the PLO had agreed must be decided in further negotiations. Had that language appeared in the operative paragraphs, the United States would have exercised its veto, she stressed.

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At the request of the Government of Burundi, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is sending a fact-finding mission to that country tomorrow to investigate the coup d'état and massacres there last October. The mission will also examine with the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the Government what other activities might be undertaken in exercise of the Secretary-General's good offices, in accordance with the statement of the President of the Security Council of 16 November 1993.

The members of the mission will be: Siméon Aké (Chairman), former Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire; Martin Huslid, former Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations; and Michèle Poliacof, Political Affairs Officer, Department of Political Affairs. They are expected to be in Burundi for two to three weeks, and will then spend a day in Addis Ababa to consult with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The mission is expected to return to New York around 15 April.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the Director-General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Peter Sutherland, have jointly appointed J. Denis Bélisle as Executive Director of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)/GATT International Trade Centre. Mr. Bélisle, a Canadian national, will serve at the level of Assistant Secretary-General for three years. Prior to his current appointment, he was Canada's Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT promotes exports by developing countries and countries in transition, and is responsible for technical cooperation with developing countries in the field of trade promotion.

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Croatia has said that it is willing to accept the extension of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mandate on its territory, but that the Force must improve its performance and fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions. In a letter to the Council dated 16 March, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman said UNPROFOR should not allow the hostile behaviour of militant Serbian insurgents in United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) to impede it. He contended that the Serbs were carrying out terrorist acts, threatening Croatia's territorial integrity, destabilizing its Government and undermining its society. The Security Council should take those terrorist acts into account when considering the problems of the UNPAs.

President Tudjman went on to say that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) must cooperate in the full and prompt implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping plan for Croatia. That included provisions dealing with the demilitarization of the UNPAs and the recognition of Croatia within its internationally accepted borders. He stressed that Croatia remained fully committed to the peace process and was ready to cooperate with UNPROFOR. Peace and stability in the region depended on the rapid and peaceful reintegration of the UNPAs into Croatia's legal and political system, he added.

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